

CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT

Fresno to Bakersfield Section: Locally Generated Alternative

Explanatory Cover Note: Combined Supplemental Record of Decision and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

Prepared by the

California High-Speed Rail Authority

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) is issuing a combined Supplemental Record of Decision (ROD) and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Fresno to Bakersfield Section Locally Generated Alternative (F-B LGA) Project. Issuance of combined or simultaneous documents is authorized by Section 1311 of the FAST Act (49 United States Code [U.S.C.] § 304a(b)) and 23 U.S.C. 139(n). The F-B LGA provides an alternative alignment for a 23.13-mile segment of the Fresno to Bakersfield Section between the city of Shafter and the city of Bakersfield. The F-B LGA station would be located at the intersection of State Route 204 and F Street in Bakersfield. A maintenance of infrastructure facility would be located along the F-B LGA in northern Shafter between Poplar Avenue and Fresno Avenue.

The Authority takes these actions under a program generally known as NEPA Assignment. More specifically, the environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project have been carried out by the State of California pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated July 23, 2019, and executed by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the State of California. Accordingly, the Authority is now the NEPA lead agency.

The Final Supplemental EIS uses an errata sheet approach as authorized by 23 U.S.C. § 139(n)(1) and 49 U.S.C. 304a(a) and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA at 40 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] 1503.4(c) and 1506.9. Under these provisions, the use of errata sheets in lieu of rewriting and reprinting a Draft EIS is appropriate when comments received on a Draft EIS are minor, and the Authority's responses to those comments are limited to factual corrections or explanations of why the comments do not warrant further response. The Authority is publishing the errata sheets with the combined Final Supplemental EIS and Supplemental ROD. The document titled, "Changes to the Draft Supplemental EIS (Errata)" describes exactly where text is added, revised, or removed from the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.

In 2014, the Authority and FRA completed California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and NEPA project-level analysis of high-speed rail alignments and associated facilities from Fresno to Bakersfield. FRA issued a ROD in 2014 that approved a high-speed rail alignment from Fresno to Bakersfield. The portion of the 2014 alignment between approximately Shafter and Bakersfield generally follows the existing BNSF rail alignment south from Shafter and into Bakersfield, with a station at Truxtun Avenue. Subsequently, the Authority and FRA chose to evaluate an additional alignment into Bakersfield from the north (and a different associated Bakersfield station location), starting at approximately the city of Shafter. That new alignment alternative was denominated the "Locally Generated Alternative" or "LGA".

To evaluate the potential impacts and effects of the F-B LGA, the Authority prepared a Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, which is a CEQA/NEPA joint document, for which the FRA was the NEPA lead agency. Under both CEQA and NEPA, the Authority and FRA issued the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS for public comment on November 9, 2017. The comment period closed on January 16, 2018.

Under CEQA only, the Authority prepared a Final Supplemental EIR. The Authority Board certified the Final EIR and approved the F-B LGA Project from Shafter to and including the Bakersfield F Street Station in its capacity as state lead agency only on October 16, 2018, which completed the CEQA process for the F-B LGA Project. Figure 1 shows the limits of the 2014 CEQA and NEPA decisions, the Authority's 2018 CEQA decision, and the LGA Supplemental EIS geographic scope.

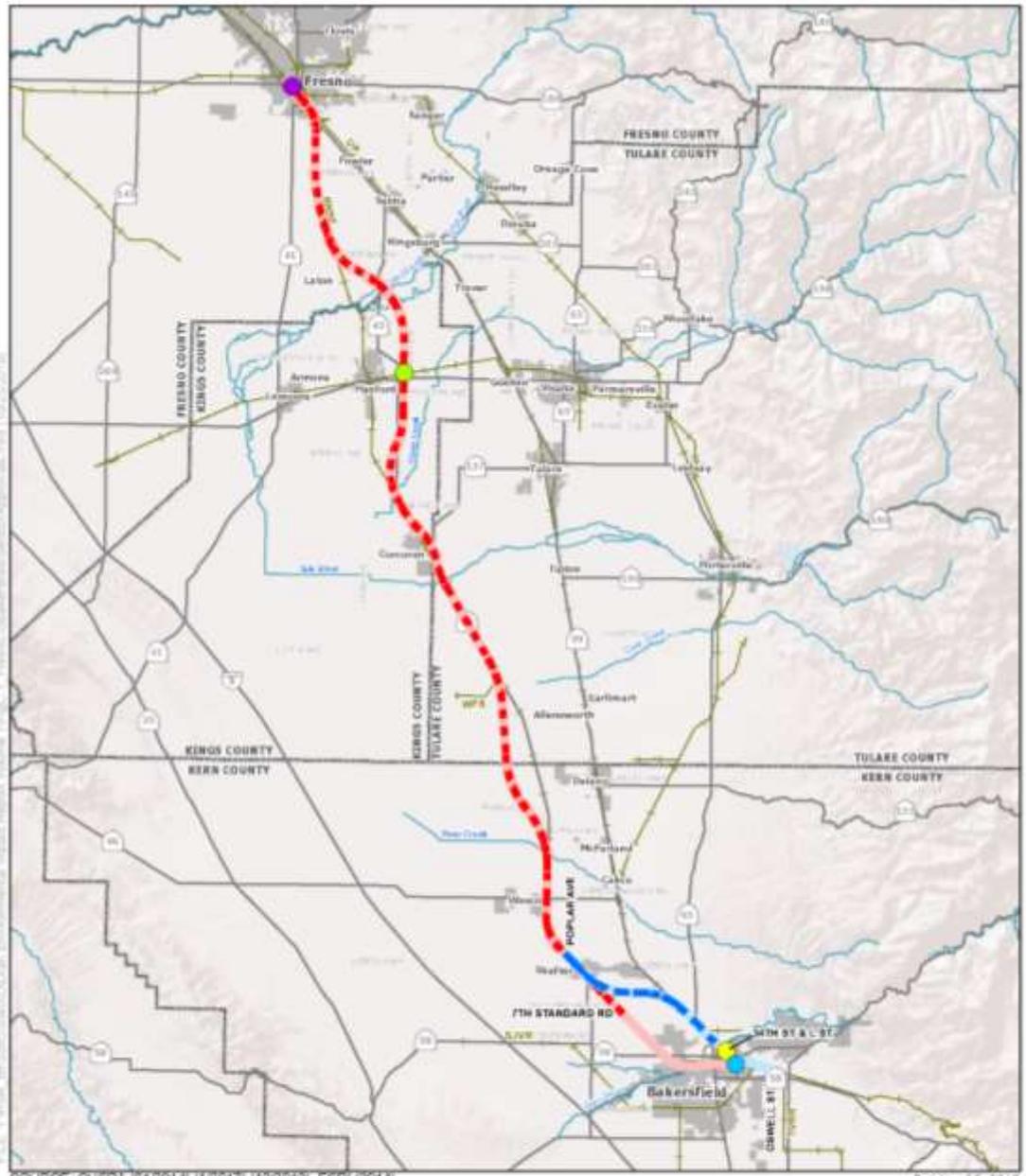
As to NEPA, the 2017 Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, on the signature page, stated that "FRA plans on issuing a single document that consists of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Supplemental Record of Decision pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 304a unless it is determined that statutory criteria or practicability considerations preclude issuance of such a combined document." As noted, the Authority is now the NEPA lead agency and has determined that issuance of a combined document is legally permissible and practicable. Therefore, the Authority is issuing this combined Final Supplemental EIS and Supplemental ROD as the lead NEPA agency.

The Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS consisted of three Volumes: Volume 1 – "Report"; Volume 2 – "Technical Appendices"; and Volume 3 – "Alignment Plans." As noted above, in lieu of preparing a traditional Final Supplemental EIS that would rewrite the entire Draft Supplemental document, the Authority instead has prepared an errata document called "Changes to the Draft Supplemental EIS (Errata)." The Final Supplemental EIS using an errata sheet approach makes minor edits to the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS volumes and adds the comments and the responses to the comments received on the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS. The comments and comment responses are in the second part of the Final Supplemental EIS.

The Supplemental ROD is the Authority's approval under NEPA, as NEPA lead agency, of the F-B LGA. It changes the FRA's 2014 ROD but only regarding the portion of the Fresno to Bakersfield Section south of Poplar Avenue in Shafter. This Supplemental ROD approves for implementation the F-B LGA Project between Poplar Avenue in Shafter and the 34th and L Street intersection in Bakersfield, and it includes a Bakersfield station at F Street instead of the 2014 alignment that generally followed the existing BNSF rail alignment south from Shafter and into Bakersfield with a station at Truxtun Avenue. The 2014 ROD included a station at Truxtun Avenue, which is replaced by the Bakersfield Station at F Street in this Supplemental ROD. This Supplemental ROD does not change any aspect of the 2014 ROD as it relates to any portion of the Fresno to Bakersfield Section north of the LGA's northern terminus at approximately Poplar Avenue in Shafter.

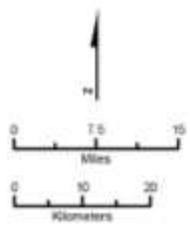
The Supplemental ROD establishes that the F-B LGA best serves the purpose and need for this project and minimizes economic, social, and environmental impacts. In addition to a summary of potential effects, the Supplemental ROD includes the findings for:

- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
- Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966
- Section 7 Endangered Species Act
- Section 404 Clean Water Act Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative
- Wetlands pursuant to Executive Order 11990
- Floodplains pursuant to Executive Order 11988
- Environmental Justice pursuant to Executive Order 12898



SOURCE: CHSRA (01/2014), (1/2017), (10/2018); ESRI (2014)

October 25, 2019



- Fresno Station
- Kings/Tulare Station
- Truxtun Avenue Station
- F Street Station
- - - May 2014 CEQA Decision
- June 2014 NEPA Decision
- - - October 2018 CEQA Decision
- F-B LGA SEIR and SEIS
- Stream/River
- Existing rail line
- Community/urban area
- County boundary

Figure 1 Fresno to Bakersfield Section Approvals

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The Combined Supplemental ROD and Final Supplemental EIS consists of the following:

Supplemental Record of Decision

Appendices to the ROD:

- Appendix A: Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative Concurrence Letters
- Appendix B: Correspondence from Federal Railroad Administration Regarding General Conformity
- Appendix C: Mitigation Monitoring and Enforcement Plan (and Amendments)
- Appendix D: State Historic Preservation Officer Concurrence Letter
- Appendix E: Section 4(F) Concurrence Letter
- Appendix F: July 28, 2017, Biological Opinion (Buena Vista Lake Ornate Shrew)
- Appendix G: July 27, 2018, Biological Opinion (Locally Generated Alternative)

Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

Front Matter

Title and Signature Page

Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement

- Volume 1
- Volume 2
- Volume 3

Volume 1—Report

- Chapter 1.0, Project Purpose, Need, and Objectives, explains why the project is proposed and provides a history of the planning process that led to the development of the F-B LGA.
- Chapter 2.0, F-B LGA Description, describes the California High-Speed Rail Project Background, Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS Background, and development of the F-B LGA and F-B LGA F Street Station. This chapter explains that the F-B LGA will be compared to the May 2014 Project that was evaluated in the completed Fresno to Bakersfield Section Final EIR/EIS. The F-B LGA and its design options are described in Chapter 2, with visual representations (illustrations and maps) for the reader. Chapter 2 also describes modifications of Caltrans/State Facilities; travel demand and ridership forecasts; operations and service plans; additional high-speed rail development considerations; construction plan and phased implementation strategies; and permits and approvals.
- Chapter 3.0, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation Measures, is where the reader can find information about the existing transportation, environmental, and social conditions in the area of the F-B LGA. This chapter provides the findings of the analysis of potential environmental effects, along with identification of measures to mitigate the effects (called mitigation measures).
- Chapter 4.0, Section 4(f)/Section 6(f) Evaluation, provides the analysis under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 and Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.
- Chapter 5.0, Environmental Justice, evaluates the potential of the F-B LGA Project to result in disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations.

- Chapter 6.0, Cost and Operations, summarizes the estimated capital, operations, and maintenance cost for the F-B LGA evaluated in the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS, including funding and financial risk.
- Chapter 7.0, Other CEQA/NEPA Considerations, summarizes the adverse environmental effects of the F-B LGA that cannot be avoided if the F-B LGA is implemented, and the relationship between short-term use of the environment and long-term benefits of the Project.
- Chapter 8.0, Comparison of Alternatives and Identification of the Preferred Alternatives, identifies the Authority's and FRA's Preferred Alternative for the segment of the Fresno to Bakersfield Section just north of Poplar Avenue in the city of Shafter and Oswell Street in the city of Bakersfield. This chapter provides the comparative data (between the May 2014 Project and the F-B LGA) related to the Authority's and FRA's Preferred Alternative.
- Chapter 9.0, Public and Agency Involvement, contains summaries of coordination and outreach activities with agencies and the general public.
- Chapter 10.0, Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS Distribution, identifies the individuals and organizations informed about the availability of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.
- Chapter 11.0, List of Preparers, provides the names and responsibilities of the authors of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.
- Chapter 12.0, References/Sources Used in Document Preparation, cites the references and contacts used in writing the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.
- Chapter 13.0, Glossary of Terms, provides a definition of certain terms used in the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.
- Chapter 14.0, Index, provides a tool to cross-reference major topics used in the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.
- Chapter 15.0, Acronyms and Abbreviations, defines the acronyms and abbreviations used in the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.

Volume 2—Technical Appendices

These appendices provide additional technical information that supports the analysis and conclusions in Volume 1 of the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS.

Volume 3—Alignment Plans

These are the engineering plans that detail the F-B LGA. Volume 3 also includes the F Street station (the station associated with the F-B LGA alignment) plans.

Responses to Comments on Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS

This section includes comments received on the Draft Supplemental EIR/EIS and the responses to the comments.

Changes to the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Errata)

- Volume 1
- Volume 2
- Volume 3